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QUESTION OF PALESTINE
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 8 June 1998 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Following our previous two letters to you dated 29 May (A/52/926-S/1998/444) and 14 May 1998 (A/52/899-S/1998/393), I wish to inform you that Israel, the occupying Power, began archaeological excavations in the area of Burj al-Laqlaq inside the Old City of occupied East Jerusalem. These excavations by the Israeli Antiquities Authority are taking place as part of preliminary activities to build an illegal new Jewish settlement in the heart of occupied Arab East Jerusalem.

The State-sponsored excavation work is being carried out following a failed attempt by the extremist Jewish settler group Ateret Cohanim on 25 May 1998 to establish the nucleus of a new settlement in that area. At a later stage, the Israeli Government decided to allow for the excavations to take place as a preliminary step towards building the settlement. Moreover, in tandem with these excavations, the illegal Israeli municipality of Jerusalem began deliberations today on a construction plan for that settlement. Such activities represent continuing attempts by the Israeli municipal and State authorities to judaize Jerusalem and to illegally change the status, demographic composition, and character of the city.

It is worth noting that these above-mentioned excavations are being undertaken in the vicinity of the destroyed Palestinian structure of the Burj al-Laqlaq Society, which was demolished by Israeli forces on 27 August 1996. In this regard, I would like to also refer to a letter we sent to you on 27 August 1996 (A/51/310-S/1996/699), following the illegal

destruction of the building of this charitable organization. I would also like to call your attention to the press statement issued by the President of the Security Council, in response to this demolition, calling upon Israel to refrain from actions that would threaten the peace process.

In addition to the above, another extremist Jewish settler group, Elad, today took over four housing units in the Silwan neighbourhood of Arab East Jerusalem. In overnight activity, the settler group took over those units, as well as a plot of land, instigating clashes with Palestinians in which one Palestinian official was injured.

The activities undertaken by the extremist settler gangs, the excavations and the attempts to build a new settlement in Burj al-Laqlaq, as well as the takeover of housing units in Silwan, all represent an escalation in hostile and provocative Israeli settlement activity in occupied Arab East Jerusalem. They constitute serious and blatant violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which is applicable to all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem. They also violate various relevant resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations that prohibit any attempts to alter the character, demographic composition and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem. In addition, the illegal actions clearly violate the agreements reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and seriously threaten recent attempts to reactivate the peace process, which was derailed by illegal settlement activity at Jabal Abu Ghneim, to the south of occupied East Jerusalem.

We expect the international community to take a clear and firm position based on international law and in accordance with United Nations resolutions against all such Israeli violations and illegal practices. The Security Council, as the body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, should take the necessary actions in this regard.

I would be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 36, 37 and 87, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dr. Nasser Al-Kidwa
Permanent Observer of Palestine
to the United Nations